

**HOWARD KIMELDORF INTERVIEWS FOR *REDS OR RACKETS?***  
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**ROSCO CRAYCRAFT OF ILWU LOCAL 8**

**INTERVIEWEE:** ROSCO CRAYCRAFT, DOUG [LAST NAME UNKNOWN]

**INTERVIEWERS:** HOWARD KIMELDORF

**SUBJECTS:** MECHANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION AGREEMENT OF 1960; INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD; INTERNATIONAL SEAMEN'S UNION; MARINE WORKERS INDUSTRIAL UNION; UNITED ELECTRICAL WORKERS; 1922 PORTLAND WATERFRONT STRIKE

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[00:00:00] **HOWARD KIMELDORF:** —Craycraft in Seattle, Washington on 12/16/81. Why don't you spell your name for me, in case there's any problem?

[00:00:10] **ROSCO CRAYCRAFT:** C-R-A-Y-C-R-A-F-T. Craycraft.

[00:00:14] **HOWARD:** Just like it sounds.

[00:00:15] **ROSCO:** ROSCO, R-O-S-C-O. No E.

[00:00:18] **HOWARD:** Okay. Why don't you begin by telling me how you got onto the waterfront, the first year you were there, and why you came onto the waterfront, and what work was like at that time.

[00:00:28] **ROSCO:** I came onto the waterfront in 1929 in Portland, Oregon. That was the Depression days. It was almost impossible to pick up work anyplace. I had starts in different opportunities, different lines of work. Machine work and so forth. Business after business was going out of business. Depression was on us.

[00:00:56] **HOWARD:** About how old were you in 1929?

[00:00:59] **ROSCO:** 24 years old.

[00:01:01] **HOWARD:** Single?

[00:01:03] **ROSCO:** Married, two children to feed. We were living in Portland at that time in a small four-room house. I went down on the waterfront, trying to pick up a couple hours' work. In fact, I was trying to pick up work anyplace I could get a job in those days. Even if you only made four bits, you know. The Depression was getting worse all the time.

I happened to run into an old friend on the waterfront by the name Ory Cole, C-O-L-E. Ory's was working in a steady gang. In those days, we had preference gangs. Extra work come along, you could fill in. I happened to pick up a job filling in in the Pete Hendrickson gang. Due to age, which was at that time, when a man began to slow down, the waterfront employers would let him go. It was up to the boss to maintain a high standard of production in his gangs. Attrition was heavy amongst the elderly people. They were always looking for younger men. There were no unions on the waterfront.

[00:02:20] **HOWARD:** Could I ask you a question about that? Was there a blue book union in Portland, a so-called blue book union?

[00:02:25] **ROSCO:** No, there was no blue book union in Portland. But there were quite a few men who were union men, after they broke the union in 1921. These men were always the backbone who tried to organize. At age at that time, but as they got older, and couldn't hit the fast pace, they were eliminated. They were interested in an organized union. I happened to get into a gang where several of the old-timers in the gang. That's where I learned my basic background on what had transpired in the strikes previous to that. Made me more determined if ever I had an opportunity, I'd work and see if I could help build a union. For protection in my older years as I aged.

[00:03:16] **HOWARD:** Can I ask you a question about that? Did the men ever talk about the 1922 strike?

[00:03:20] **ROSCO:** Oh yes. Old-timers were always talking about the '22 strike. The younger men like myself learned what did transpire in the previous history of the unions.

[00:03:37] **HOWARD:** What did they say about the '22 strike? Can you remember the kinds of lessons they learned?

[00:03:43] **ROSCO:** Well, you're saying '22. If I recall correctly, it was '21 the final union, they told them, was broke. In those days, it was through them that we learned, the younger men. That basically the unions were not organized correctly. Each port had a separate contract with the waterfront employers. Then, if one port went out on strike, the other ports would be working. Even in the Columbia River, like the small locals, like in Rainier, Oregon or Astoria, Oregon, they'd be out on the strike, and the Portland local would continue working and all the other locals in the area. That always tended to break the strikes. It was easy to reroute it. The older workers told us, if we ever started to organize again, we should organize coastwise. When a strike would occur in one union, the other unions would strike. The waterfront could not play one union against the other.

[00:04:43] **HOWARD:** How about industrial forms of organization? Was that stressed versus craft unionism? Or did they talk about that?

[00:04:51] **ROSCO:** Well, we always had talk of the industrial forms of organization. The old Industrial Workers of the World, IWW, was prominent in a lot of people's mind. But the pitfalls of the IWW was that they were very good at organizing, but they would not take any political action. So what they would gain on the economic front, they would lose through legislation. You want to recall, too, the Palmer Raids [arrest and deportation of leftists by U.S. Department of Justice] happened in the early twenties. When the Palmer Raids came in, they railroaded the more militant people into the jails or sent them on down the road, as the case may be. That kept labor in a turmoil all the time. It makes it seem ridiculous today that we see the administration is out trying to organize unions, as they claim, in Poland, when here in the United States they're doing all they can to break unions. We have the local example here in the Cuddy Packing Plant where the owners of the Cuddy Packing Plant sold out the industry to members of the Cuddy administration and re-opened the plant at 50% of the wages of the workers in the plant.

[00:06:17] **HOWARD:** Is that right? Was that meat packers?

[00:06:20] **ROSCO:** Yes, the meat packers. Cuddy Packing Company. We have other organizations here in the city trying to follow the same line. Over in the mining belt, in Idaho, they're shutting down mines and reopening with scab labor. They're bringing in all these immigrants from Vietnam, so-called people who helped us win the war. It's a position the unions, that they helped us win the war by buying them off. What they hell are we going to do with them once they get in the United States? Somebody over there offers them more money to help them defeat us? And they're using them as scabs all around, every place you go they're using them as immigrants. All these immigrants. They're even bringing in Poles now, in theory to protect them. We can't understand why they can't stay home and protect their own union, same as we protected our unions. They're bringing them in here and using them as strike breakers here. All with the blessing of the government.

[00:07:22] **HOWARD:** It's a familiar pattern throughout American history.

[00:07:24] **ROSCO:** It's a familiar pattern that here they want to break the unions. Then they turn around and try to tell us through the press and the media that they're supporting the unions in Poland.

[00:07:35] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Not the first time there's been hypocrites.

[00:07:37] **ROSCO:** I got it. It's ridiculous.

[00:07:39] **HOWARD:** Yeah, Wall Street Journal had a front page editorial, when the Polish workers organized their unions, how great it was that public workers had the right to strike. The following day denounced PATCO [Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization] for doing the same thing.

[00:07:48] **ROSCO:** Yeah, yeah. It's pitiful.

[00:07:54] **HOWARD:** It is. We have the lowest level of unionization of any capitalist country in the world, the United States. 20 percent of the workers in this country are organized. It's really remarkably low, one out of five.

[00:08:05] **ROSCO:** In 1931, at the height of the Depression, we started reorganizing. In Portland, we put up a considerable membership within the union, but we couldn't hold the membership until the Wagner Act [National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which guarantees rights to unions and workers] was passed.

[00:08:21] **HOWARD:** How many people were mobilized in '31, or organized? Was it an actual union, or was it sort of secretive, or?

[00:08:27] **ROSCO:** No, secret to this extent—if you were too proud of a man in the union, and your thoughts were well-known, the employer would try to eliminate those. You want to remember, the employers had full charge of the hiring. We had a man running our organization in Seattle, the employers' man, Jack O'Neil. What he tried to organize and get into the organization was ex-prize fighters and athletic type of men.

[00:08:56] **HOWARD:** This was in Seattle or Portland?

[00:08:57] **ROSCO:** Portland.

[00:08:58] **HOWARD:** Portland, okay.

[00:08:58] **ROSCO:** See, you want to remember, I'm from Portland local, and I transferred up here in the early fifties. So my history is the Columbia River history. When we did go out on strike in 1934, the ones that he had organized tried to break the union and keep the union down was our best goon squads.

[00:09:22] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:09:24] **ROSCO:** Our best supporters. I could enumerate them by name, which would not serve any purpose, but . . .

[00:09:30] **HOWARD:** They were brought in as just kind of tough guys, right? To, uh—

[00:09:33] **ROSCO:** They were given the preference job, which at that time the preference job is the Admiral Line. The minimum pay in those days was two hours, so I guess you have all that stuff without me going into that.

[00:09:49] **HOWARD:** Could I ask you few more questions about the impact of the Wobblies? You said that the older men were the ones who taught you these lessons. Were the older men more likely to have been the Wobblies? If there were any around?

[00:09:58] **ROSCO:** No, the older men, you want to remember—see, we were totally union men. The older men were not Wobblies; they were members of the union. A lot of the older men resented the Wobblies. They figured—see the Wobbly theory, if you want to know the history of the Wobblies, the Wobbly theory is one crew going and one crew coming. That was the Wobbly theory. Three men to every job, and they didn't believe in any political action. They didn't believe in solidifying their gains through politics.

[00:10:30] **HOWARD:** What do you mean, "three men to every job"?

[00:10:34] **ROSCO:** Say that you wanted to organize a sawmill. You go into a sawmill, and you try to organize the men on the job, what you call the stunt jumpers, the homebodies. Our term in those days was "scissorbill." In other words, a scissorbill was whatever the employer'd give him. He'd accept it because he wanted to stay on the job and take care of it. But a lot of those men could move on account of their family. We'd try to organize the good ones. Then the one crew coming would be, like, say I'd go into a plant sawmill like tonight. Or I'd go in late afternoon, too late to probably work that day, and I'd get me a job in the mill from the foreman. He'd give me a check for to get my supper and my breakfast and bed so I could go to work the next morning. Then I'd go out on the job—that'd be your crew coming. You go out on the job the next morning. If you didn't like the job, or maybe you was relieving the Wobblies already on the job. The Wobbly on the job, he wouldn't like

this. This was wrong; that was wrong. He wanted this kind of condition; he wanted new bedsheets and so on. He couldn't get those, the hell with it! He'd go. So that's what we call one crew coming, one crew working, one crew going. Maybe you'd belong to all three crews as I'd explained it. You might come in today; you might stay two or three days; then you'd go on to the next place. But, to see, there, to the scissorbills—

[00:12:13] **HOWARD:** Were you a Wobbly?

[00:12:15] **ROSCO:** Back in those days.

[00:12:16] **HOWARD:** You were?

[00:12:16] **ROSCO:** Back in the early twenties.

[00:12:18] **HOWARD:** In the lumber camps?

[00:12:20] **ROSCO:** In the sawmills and so on. That's where I got my start.

[00:12:23] **HOWARD:** What did your father do for employment?

[00:12:25] **ROSCO:** My father was a sawmill man all his life.

[00:12:27] **HOWARD:** Was he a Wobbly?

[00:12:28] **ROSCO:** No, he wasn't. No, but he was a union man. I mean, he joined a union the first time the union's come into the sawmills and all.

[00:12:36] **HOWARD:** So you were a Wobbly. That's interesting. You must have been a—

[00:12:39] **ROSCO:** I was a young kid.

[00:12:40] **HOWARD:** —Yeah, really young. I talk to some of the old Wobblies who—

[00:12:43] **ROSCO:** I had a lot of experience with the Wobblies. That's why I'm so politically-minded today. Because I seen our mistakes so bad.

[00:12:51] **HOWARD:** Now, I've always read the books where they talk about how the Wobblies would not engage in political action. This was the cause for the later split between them and the more political radical groups. But what did it mean to a worker, a longshoreman on the waterfront, what was the importance of political action anyway? They could get everything they wanted through economic slow-downs and things like that.

[00:13:08] **ROSCO:** Yeah, but see, they take it away from you. They'll say the union's gotten too strong. They'll say that you gain a lot through accidents, like we're in the fight now with the Senate Bill 1182 [Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act Amendments of] , where they're trying to take away the gains we made in the laws for accidents, for protection.

See, I was hurt. Strained my back. Prior to the 1934 strike. This was when the waterfront employers were in charge of everything. I had my back muscles tore pretty bad, but I was off six weeks. I had to be off six weeks to collect my first week of pay. The first week, I don't get a dime, unless I'm off six weeks. If I go back to work inside of six weeks, I lose the first week. So they were in collusion with most of the doctors. I remember very distinctly myself when I was hurt, and I approached my sixth week, I was told by my doctor I was ready to go

to work. Christ, he reached down there and took the goddamn—I had the big white thing carrying around to hold my back up—just tore it off, skin and all. He didn’t give a damn. I was out on my own then, wife and two children to support. Two hours a day minimum. The boss told me, “If you don’t go to work, you go home.” Shoveling jobs I couldn’t take or anything like that, because my back wouldn’t take it.

[00:14:43] **HOWARD:** How’d you work?

[00:14:45] **ROSCO:** That’s the point. You work crippled up. Well, if you happen to be with the right bunch of men, they more or less protected you. That’s about the way we could cover up for one another. You had to. That’s the way you got by. Your covering up was better in those days than it is today.

[00:15:02] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:15:04] **ROSCO:** Because, see, you had to cover up to protect one another. Because you might be the next guy. Where in the hell you going?

[00:15:09] **HOWARD:** So, a walking boss couldn’t look down in the hold and say, “Hey, Craycraft, you’re not working. You’re not pulling your load.”

[00:15:15] **ROSCO:** Well, that was done. That’s what I’m talking about the attrition and the older people and the ones that was more militant. Because, see, as you got older and you couldn’t keep—I was fired one time on the job. I guess about the only time in my life I was fired on the job. I was only fired twice, I guess in my whole history. I mean, to be actually fired for not working.

We were on a discharging copra [dried coconut kernel] . Discharging copra, you work four tubs. Four corners of the hatch, two men to the tub shoveling. When that hook come in, they take out this tub. Well, then when they come back, they bring the empty here. You hook on the full one here. It keeps going around. We were working pretty good, and my partner and I were meeting the hook all the time. So, we happened to have a hell of a good boss. So the supervisor of the job said, “You gotta fire two men. The copra is not coming out fast enough.” We had a couple of elderly men in the there that couldn’t shovel fast enough, that couldn’t meet the hook. So the boss, instead of firing the older men, he fired myself and the other men. He said, “I have to let you go. I got to speed up the operation. You young bucks be around tomorrow when we go on the lumber job.” I said, “Okay.” So we were fired. They got two more men out of the hall, put them to work. Well, we went to work for him the next day again. But that was the speed-up of all the other men.

You see, that’s the way they worked in those days. If you go down on the job, if you was in #2 hatch, #3, or #4 hatch, where the big open hatches was—you was on the East Coast lumber—if you didn’t put in an average of 25,000 feet/an hour, you’d definitely hit the ladder all the time.

Log jobs, I’ve seen log job after log job. Where 50,000 feet of logs went in every two hours. In those days, you put a wire sailor on it and hoisted it—

[00:17:19] **HOWARD:** Now, there was no union, not even a company union as you recall?

[00:17:22] **ROSCO:** Oh no. There was no company unions in the Northwest in those days.

[00:17:25] **HOWARD:** See, Joe Werner told me there was. In ‘31, he was a delegate to an ILA convention.

[00:17:30] **ROSCO:** Oh, that wasn't the company union, no.

[00:17:30] **HOWARD:** In ‘31.

[00:17:31] **ROSCO:** No, no, I belonged to that union. In 1931 we were organized by a man by the name of Paddy—

[00:17:40] **HOWARD:** Morris or something?

[00:17:41] **ROSCO:** Paddy Morris from Tacoma. Paddy Morris came in there, because I met Paddy time and time again. I was on the executive board. In '31. I met with Paddy Morris time and again, and Matt Mehan. Paddy Morris would come in there. We'd start up the union; we'd go good for two or three months, and, at the end of two or three months, we would have nobody left again.

[00:18:07] **HOWARD:** Why?

[00:18:08] **ROSCO:** Well, point number one was it was hard to make them understand what a union do for them when you had no chance to build a union at that time. It's hard to hold your membership then. Point number two is the employers would get the word from up above down to the hiring boss, like Jack O'Neil or someone, and say "Don't hire so-and-so. Because he was too active in the union." They wouldn't hire him, only in an emergency. If they wanted to discipline me, the word would come down, "Craycraft's a good worker alright, but let him sit on the bench for a couple of weeks." What the hell are you gonna do? You got no place to go. You want to remember at that time it was the Depression.

[00:18:58] **HOWARD:** What was Paddy Morris like?

[00:19:02] **ROSCO:** I don't know how to describe him to you. Paddy Morris is good, honest, sincere fellow who tried to do all he could. But, like anybody trying to organize then—you want to remember, you had Joseph P. Ryan on the East Coast running the organization. Dictated to from the top. Joseph P. Ryan would say, "Here's \$1000," or whatever he allowed him. I don't know, but I'm just saying. "Go down and try to organize." They'd get in and get busy trying to organize. He was the Pacific Coast organizer. You want to remember the waterfront employers never did break Tacoma, you see, because Tacoma—you can't call it a company union because it belonged to the international longshoremen union from the East Coast. But they might as well be a company union because they went down the line with the boss, which is why they got the protection. They used them as a stop gap to run the unions in, see?

[00:19:57] **HOWARD:** Did the Tacoma local press their demands less vigorously than the other locals? Is that what you're saying?

[00:20:03] **ROSCO:** Well, I'd say that. Because you want to remember, see, they worked more like a company would work, where they broke them just the same as they did the rest of them. That stands to reason, see?

[00:20:15] **HOWARD:** Because I've read that, and I've tried to figure out why they had those exception parts in the hall history. One thing that stands out is the Tacoma employers were a little more sophisticated. They said, "Look, unionism is on the verge of coming. Let's accept and not try to antagonize it."

[00:20:28] **ROSCO:** But you want to remember that Tacoma employers are the same ones you got in Seattle.

[00:20:33] **HOWARD:** Are they the same?

[00:20:33] **ROSCO:** Hell, your whole goddamn coast is the same when it comes to employers!

[00:20:36] **HOWARD:** There aren't little quirks in each port? Like the L.A. [Los Angeles, California] employers are vicious down there. I know that. Or they were.

[00:20:40] **ROSCO:** Well, that's on account of the men that run it. You want to remember your main policy comes from—like, back in those days, we had maybe like American-Hawaiian Steamship Company might have a different policy. But say, from Admiral Line Steamship Company or the—

[knocking on door]

Come on in!

[00:21:02] **UNIDENTIFIED VOICE:** Rosco, can you handle a phone call?

[00:21:04] **ROSCO:** Sure.

[interruption in interview]

[00:21:04] **HOWARD:** A few more questions about the Wobblies, and then we'll move on to the 1934 strike if we can. When you came on to the waterfront, how much of an impact did the Wobblies have? Were there any Wobblies around?

[00:21:16] **ROSCO:** What Wobblies there were around, they weren't as an organized group. In fact, I think—we used to have a little club down there what you might call “has-been,” where the older fellas would hang out. As far as paying dues and all, it was more like a donation for coffee and so on. Because, you want to remember, they're getting older, too. Your Wobblies are mostly transient men. Your Wobbly organization never was composed of very few homeowners and so on. There were mostly transient. So your Wobbly movement was really destroyed by the Palmer raids in the early twenties. That's what broke the Wobblies.

[00:22:05] **HOWARD:** Do you have any sense of how big they were during the '22 strike?

[00:22:09] **ROSCO:** Oh, I don't because, you'll want to remember, I'm a small figment of the Wobblies then. Another thing that you'll want to remember—I'm a pretty young kid then. I'm in the late teens and starting in my early twenties. I have to rely mostly on my information from the old-timers and so on. All that stuff's exaggerated.

[00:22:32] **HOWARD:** What did the men say? You said they did talk about the Wobblies, though, right? When you came on there in '29?

[00:22:39] **ROSCO:** You'll want to remember your unions was weak in those days. Most of your unions had figured the Wobblies were broken, stuff like that. That's generally the attitude of your regular trade unionist. Your regular trade unionist was a craft unionist. If he was a longshoreman, he's a longshoreman. If he was a blacksmith, he's a blacksmith. If he was a teamster, he's a teamster. So on down the line.

See, the war to stop unionism in the war years, '16, '17, '18 and so forth, the timber barons had the 4 L's [Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, a company union] . The 4 L's, you might as well say, is a company union. When you go to look at the trade union history itself, you have to take big organizations like the 4 L's and take them into consideration. The Wobblies is in there to break up the 4 L's, and so forth.

[00:23:44] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question related to this. How many of the longshoremen, as you recall at the time you came on the waterfront, were either former lumber workers or former sailors or fishermen?

[00:23:55] **ROSCO:** The biggest share. One of your biggest driving forces in longshore unions came from the sailors and seamen. If you think back in the old days, the sailors had all done the longshore work on the ships when they had to get into foreign ports and so forth.



[00:24:13] **HOWARD:** What proportion of longshoremen were seamen or former seamen? Do you have any idea?

[00:24:16] **ROSCO:** I have no idea, but I do know this—that you take most of your leaders, like your gang foremen and so forth. They were ex-seamen, from mates and so on like that. I’m speaking now of just the Northwest. You’ll want to remember, the Northwest, what we handled mostly was logs and lumber. You take your mates and all coming off the old steam schooners, ex-mates and so forth who knew how to stow. Back in the old steam schooner days, they used to have a saw down in the hold. If a stick of lumber didn’t fit into bulkhead to bulkhead, they’d have a saw there to saw off a piece to plug it up. Because they didn’t dare to have them shifting or anything.

[00:25:00] **HOWARD:** Must have been highly skilled work, right? Or?

[00:25:06] **ROSCO:** You take a good longshoreman—in those days, a good longshoreman was a valuable man because he had to know lengths of lumber and widths and how to stow it. It had to be prevented from shifting, same way loading grain, and so on like that. Our grain started from sacks. All of our grain loading was sacks in the old steam schooner days.

See, I came in at the end of the steam schooner days. Your steam schooners begin to go out in the early part of the century. That’s when your—well, we still had a few steam schooners going up and down the river there in the [nineteen] tens, but very very few. I remember the last one that I seen loading piling was down in Rainier, Oregon, where they left the back end off. The back end dropped down, but they had a winch up on the forward end and a wire run clear up the back end. They ran it up through the tail to load it, see. I remember that. That was in the early twenties; that’s the last time that I remember of that type. I remember as a kid there on the Columbia River—I was raised in Rainier, Oregon—I remember as a kid seeing the old sailing vessels coming up the river when they’d be towed up. During the wheelers.

[00:26:31] **HOWARD:** Wow, a long time ago.

[00:26:34] **ROSCO:** See, it’s a different ball game today.

[00:26:36] **HOWARD:** Yeah, for sure. Okay, let’s go up to the ‘34 strike then. I guess you tried to organize the union in ‘31. There were periodic attempts, but they never really took hold.

[00:26:46] **ROSCO:** Nothing. Well, you ought to remember, Depression days, it was root hog or die. It was hard to organize anyone because it’s survival of the hungriest, you might as well say. That’s what it was amounted to. Those were tough times, and that’s where we’re headed today, this Reaganomics.

[00:27:04] **HOWARD:** I know. Well, it’s gonna force people to think about a lot of their views, hopefully. How about the ‘34 strike? You were pretty active in that, weren’t you?

[00:27:15] **ROSCO:** I was, all the way through that strike. What brought on the ‘34 strike, if you want to poke back in the history, what brought it on. Our working conditions got so bad on the waterfront, the men had no other place to go. We were in the same boat with the PWA [Public Works Administration] workers and everybody else. No one had anything; he’s living from hand to mouth. To give you a good example, [inaudible 00:27:41?] I was living in a nice four-room house there in the early thirties out on Duke Street, paying \$5 bulk rent. Two bedrooms.

[00:27:58] **HOWARD:** \$5/month?

[00:27:58] **ROSCO:** They raised my rent to \$7—made me so goddam mad, I moved out to Beaverton, Oregon.

[00:28:04] **HOWARD:** [laughing] Because of \$2 rent.

[00:28:06] **ROSCO:** Bought me a place, 3.7 acres for \$1050. Little three-room house, small barn on it. \$50 down, and \$10/ month. I paid for my interest and all to buy a place. So that shows you the conditions in those days.

[00:28:20] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Were you working fairly regularly, like in '32-'33? Or how was the employment?

[00:28:25] **ROSCO:** I was myself, mostly what you call “preferred gangs.” Preferred gangs—if you was in a log gang, a lumber gang, we were the highly skilled gangs. When it come to cargo, if you was on a cargo job and a lumber ship, a stevedoring company, came in, you’d get knocked off that job and put on the other job. That was the backbone of the stevedoring companies at that time.

[00:28:49] **HOWARD:** When you were on a preferred gang—let me ask two questions. What proportion of longshoremen in Portland were working in preferred gangs?

[00:28:55] **ROSCO:** Well, that I couldn’t say exactly because—roughly speaking, we had around 60 gangs all together. Then the rest of them make up—see, practically everything in those days was preferred gangs or make-up gangs. But the make-up gangs, they didn’t work consistently. If a make-up gang was on a job and a preferred gang got knocked off the job because its boat finished, they’d knock off the make-up gang and put the preferred gang on to take their place. Because they wanted the preferred men. They also wanted to keep them satisfied; they wanted to hold them.

[00:29:34] **HOWARD:** So, most people worked in preferred gangs in—

[00:29:37] **ROSCO:** The ones that got the most work.

[00:29:38] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:29:39] **ROSCO:** The ones that really got the most work always was in a preferred gang.

[00:29:45] **HOWARD:** Were they the better workers as a rule?

[00:29:48] **ROSCO:** Well, they were better workers, and, on top of being better workers, they worked together every day. They knew what they was doing. You take a preferred lumber gang—they could load lumber all around a make-up gang. Because you’re used to it, you’re working together. Same way log gang. You take a preferred log gang; preferred log gang could put in a lot more logs than a make-up gang. Because you work together and you’re more used to it.

[00:30:13] **HOWARD:** You work with the same group of guys on the gang, right?

[00:30:16] **ROSCO:** And you knew what the other man was doing all the time.

[00:30:18] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question about that. Did it sort of build up a sense of solidarity among the men working on the same gang, shoulder to shoulder, day after day?

[00:30:26] **ROSCO:** Oh, yes. One gang would try to—

[END PART ONE/BEGIN PART TWO]

[00:30:33] **HOWARD:** —solidarity. Did it also make the men more willing to take action against the employers, or not?

[00:30:39] **ROSCO:** No, I don't think that even—[interruption]

[Audio skips forward]

[00:30:45] **HOWARD:** Okay, we were talking about the preferred gangs, but let's move on. Why don't you tell me about the '34 strike, when it took place, any incidents that were of major importance around there?

[00:30:57] **ROSCO:** Well, I don't want to go into that. Shut that off.

[Interview audio pauses]

[00:31:03] **HOWARD:** Okay. I wanted to ask you a little bit about the influence of radicals in the '34 strike. There was the Marine Workers Industrial Union. Did they have much of an impact in Portland?

[00:31:16] **ROSCO:** No. The Marine Workers Industrial Union, you'll want to remember—what we were with at that time was the Seamen's International Union [sic; International Seamen's Union, ISU] . We requested the Marine Workers Industrial Union help us out and so on. We didn't turn down anyone, whatever organization or classification you might consider to be in, as long as he'd work and support us on our aims. That'd go for church or people out in the masses of people. Anyone who'd give us assistance, we'd cooperate with—farmers or anyone.

You'll want to remember, the farmers at that time—now, I'm not speaking of big-class farmers, but the average farmer out there was small, 40-acre farms and so forth. They'd bring us a lot of fruit and vegetables and everything to keep our soup kitchen going because we were all in the same boat.

So, the Marine Workers Industrial Union I remember very well. They had a lot of men that were supposed to be radicals, but I didn't consider them any more radical than what we were. Maybe a lot of people would say they're a bunch of communists and stuff like that, but, to me, it didn't mean a damn thing. They were in the same boat as we were. They were trying to fight for jobs. What formed the Marine Workers Industrial Union mostly, as I see it, was that they thought their leadership at the top was too hidebound, I'd guess you'd call it, in leadership. The longshoremen, you remember, went out on May ninth. It was May sixteenth before we could get the Seamen's International Union [sic] to take a stand on it. Then the Masters, Mates & Pilots, if I remember correctly, and the Marine Engineers come along about the twentieth of May. We had to force the leadership out, and the reason we forced the leadership out was because we forced the men off the jobs. And then off the boat.

[00:33:13] **HOWARD:** Does the Marine Workers Industrial Union play a part in sort of prodding the men?

[00:33:15] **ROSCO:** The Marine Workers Industrial Union was a progressive part of the old SIU [sic] . Lots of people say they were controlled by communists and radicals, but I always looked at it the same as myself. That they were fighting for the job and wanted to get better conditions, and they were ahead of their leadership. Their leadership—

[00:33:35] **HOWARD:** You wouldn't characterize them as sort of a radical union?

[00:33:37] **ROSCO:** Well, I don't. I never did.

[00:33:38] **HOWARD:** I guess it depends on what we mean by those terms.

[00:33:40] **ROSCO:** For me, I never did class them as radical because I always considered them as fighting for the job. As far as that goes, you want to remember all the longshoremen were considered radical and communists, too!

[00:33:51] **HOWARD:** Right, that's what I'm saying. It depends on how we define it. Would you classify yourself as a radical at that stage?

[00:33:57] **ROSCO:** No, I didn't.

[00:33:58] **HOWARD:** You weren't?

[00:33:59] **ROSCO:** I wouldn't say it.

[00:33:59] **HOWARD:** A former Wobbly?

[00:34:00] **ROSCO:** I wouldn't class myself as a radical.

[00:34:02] **HOWARD:** How would you class yourself?

[00:34:04] **ROSCO:** I'd class myself as trying to protect my job. If you want to call it progressive, you can call it that or whatever you want to. But I was fighting for survival.

[00:34:12] **HOWARD:** Let me ask you a question. Why is it that older people think that radical's a bad word? They seem to—I've talked to old-timers that say, "No, I'm not a radical. I believe in socialism, but I'm not a radical."

[00:34:22] **ROSCO:** The fact is I never did go that route.

[00:34:25] **HOWARD:** You never did?

[00:34:27] **ROSCO:** I never did consider myself a radical, and I don't consider the Marine Workers Industrial Union as radical. I don't consider the longshoremen as radicals.

[00:34:35] **HOWARD:** You're known as a left-winger in this union by everyone else, right?

[00:34:38] **ROSCO:** I'm called left-winger today.

[00:34:40] **HOWARD:** Yeah. What's that mean?

[00:34:42] **ROSCO:** You ought to remember, the Marine Workers Industrial Union even put out bulletins against me, and I was a real conservative.

[00:34:48] **HOWARD:** Against you?

[00:34:49] **ROSCO:** Yes. I have copies of the bulletin at home where they say that I come down and try to buy them with butter when I'd take food down to them.

[00:34:56] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:34:57] **ROSCO:** Yes, I have the bulletins that show that. [laughing] Well, it's hard for a person to believe it, their game, but I was considered as a real conservative.

[00:35:10] **HOWARD:** Hmm. Were many of the longshoremen in the Marine Workers Industrial Union, or do you know?

[00:35:16] **ROSCO:** To my knowledge, none.

[00:35:18] **HOWARD:** None?

[00:35:18] **ROSCO:** None.

[00:35:19] **HOWARD:** Absolutely none? Mostly they were seamen, then, if they were—

[00:35:26] **ROSCO:** See, the seamen—you ought to remember, the seamen at that time, I think, if I recall correctly, were getting on \$16/a month. It don't take much to make a man a radical if he's only getting \$16/a month. [laughing] You could call damn near anyone a radical then. Take a look at it as a broad picture.

[00:35:50] **HOWARD:** See, I guess what I'm trying to figure out is why, during the thirties, you have this major split, really. The longshoremen in New York are quiescent; they don't make any moves against Ryan. Pete Panko [longshoreman and union activist executed by the mob] and a few guys like that, but they're crushed. On the west coast, they begin with the '34 strike. They continue with quickies and work stoppages. Where does that come from? Is there some kind of radical tradition or a militant tradition you're drawing on? I think partly it's the Wobblies, but I don't know what else it is. It's partly Bridges of course, too.

[00:36:21] **ROSCO:** I don't know how to explain it to you, outside of just like I have previously here. We were so damned downtrodden, we were as one then. You want to remember—

[00:36:29] **HOWARD:** The ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] was worse off than you guys, I'll tell you. Those guys in New York, they had it terrible.

[00:36:34] **ROSCO:** Well, it's just like I've heard some of the men from the east coast that was out here and talk to us. Well, in terms of Joseph P. Ryan, they got by. They could put it on a \$20 bill and basket on Sunday then come out and sell the basket on Monday. The church had a lot do with it.

Back then, you want to remember, they were organized different. They were organized: your dago [Italian or Spanish] gangs, your Polish gangs, your Irish gangs, and so on like that. Here we start out with the intention of organizing everybody that's on the waterfront. Maybe you could say it's what we learned with the Wobblies.

Remember, I was back in that Wobbly movement, too; we learned mainly from the errors that was made in previous organizations that an injury to one is an injury to all. So we started on that basis. We used it as a slogan. You think it's just like when you go to high school and a pep rally for a team. You're building it up, so you have a pep rally. Well, an injury to one is an injury to all. You lay your foundation. The men get to working that way.

[00:37:54] **HOWARD:** So the Wobblies may have laid some kind of a foundation then, right?

[00:37:58] **ROSCO:** Frankly, the Wobblies laid a hell of a good foundation as far as the Northwest's concerned.

[00:38:05] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I agree.

[00:38:06] **ROSCO:** In other words, the mistakes that they made is what we tried to correct. The way you do that is, well, like we did. "An injury to one is an injury to all." See where you can make your economic gains. If

you make your economic gains and you don't go at it legislatively, you'll lose them in the end because they'll take it away from you, what you build up through your union.

[00:38:30] **HOWARD:** Okay, let me ask you a question that's related to this. What was it like when you came back to work after the '34 strike? Did you think you'd won, or was it still up in the air at that point?

[00:38:40] **ROSCO:** No, we won, or we'd never have went back.

[00:38:43] **HOWARD:** Most of it was sent to arbitration at that point, wasn't it? And that could have gone against you.

[00:38:48] **ROSCO:** Well, true. You want to take a minute to remember, the times is changing. Now, I know I was very active and talked to the men. We didn't want to go back. We wanted to fight till the bitter end.

[00:38:58] **HOWARD:** Oh, you did?

[00:39:01] **ROSCO:** But common sense shows us that we'd done all we could. So that's where it comes down that we had to go on the political front. We were getting to the end of our economic [front], see? We were out 84 days then. The administration was changing. The Wagner Act had come in, and so on. They appointed O.K. Cushing, the head of the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company, the president of the board. [Edward F.] McGrady of the Labor Department, and Father [Edward J.] O'Hanna of the church. When the president [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] appointed that board [National Longshoremen's Board] and all, where the hell can we go?

We could see then, if we continue, we'd have to be fighting the government too then. It wouldn't only be the state government and so forth. What we were striking for was, if you stop and think, wasn't too much at that time. Actually what we were fighting for—a dollar/an hour, 6-hour day, and control of the hiring hall. Actually, control of the hiring hall meant our own dispatchers. In other words, we want a fair shake on it. Whatever gains we'd made had been a big improvement. We could consolidate and work for our future. I think that would be the majority opinion. So what else could we do? We had to accept. So we returned to work exactly as we went out and left the job with the understanding that we would have one of our men, selected by ourselves, to sit in the hiring hall to see that the employer could not discriminate against us. You'll want to remember that—

[00:40:54] **HOWARD:** No, but that came in arbitration later.

[00:40:56] **ROSCO:** No, it did not.

[00:40:57] **HOWARD:** Are you sure?

[00:40:58] **ROSCO:** I am sure. When we returned to work in 1934, we elected Matt Meehan in Portland. He sat right in the hiring hall with the dispatcher.

[00:41:11] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:41:12] **ROSCO:** The employer's dispatchers. To see that our men—

[00:41:14] **HOWARD:** He may have done it illegally then, because I'm almost positive that that was a decision that was arrived at by the arbitration board.

[00:41:20] **ROSCO:** No, it was not the arbitration board that give us control of the hiring hall. We had an agreement with the waterfront employers. You go back and check your records—

[00:41:29] **HOWARD:** I will.

[00:41:30] **ROSCO:** You can find this.

[00:41:32] **HOWARD:** So you had an ILA dispatcher, Meehan?

[00:41:35] **ROSCO:** No, he wasn't dispatcher.

[00:41:36] **HOWARD:** What was he, then? I'm sorry.

[00:41:38] **ROSCO:** He was the observer from our union who sat in that hiring hall to make sure there was no discrimination.

[00:41:43] **HOWARD:** Okay. That's true.

[00:41:44] **ROSCO:** That no man could be discriminated against.

[00:41:44] **HOWARD:** But he wasn't a dispatcher at that point.

[00:41:46] **ROSCO:** No, he wasn't a dispatcher.

[00:41:47] **HOWARD:** Okay.

[00:41:49] **ROSCO:** He was an observer from the union to see that they could not discriminate against any one of our men.

[00:41:53] **HOWARD:** And that was a big deal, I guess, wasn't it? Because you had—

[00:41:56] **ROSCO:** Oh, that was a big improvement.

[00:41:59] **HOWARD:** —the big halls and everything. Yeah.

[00:41:59] **ROSCO:** See, if we had returned to work without anything—you want to remember what I'm saying now—

[00:42:05] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I hear you.

[00:42:06] **ROSCO:** We returned to work exactly as we left the job. Our gangs, our set-up, everything. The employer's dispatcher there. But—

[00:42:13] **HOWARD:** Except—

[00:42:13] **ROSCO:** We have a dispatcher in there.

[00:42:17] **HOWARD:** An observer.

[00:42:18] **ROSCO:** An observer while the arbitration board is in session.

[00:42:22] **HOWARD:** And that was a moral victory for you guys, right?

[00:42:25] **ROSCO:** Yeah, that changed it. See, it's no discrimination.

[00:42:28] **HOWARD:** That's right. I never stopped to consider that. I read that, but I didn't think it was that significant at the time. You're saying it was; it was really a big victory.

[00:42:36] **ROSCO:** We got a man setting there with that employer's man. If he come to Craycraft and says, "Let's let Craycraft sit by for a week," see? Our man says, "What the hell here? Craycraft goes to work in that gang just like he did prior to the strike."

[00:42:52] **HOWARD:** So, Meehan was the Local 8.

[00:42:54] **ROSCO:** I'm pretty sure, if I remember right. Remember, we're going back 50 years now!  
[Laughing] I might not get all my names straight, but I'm pretty sure it was Meehan.

[00:43:03] **HOWARD:** Meehan has died, hasn't he?

[00:43:04] **ROSCO:** He's dead.

[00:43:05] **HOWARD:** Yeah, right. Okay, what was it like working on the docks in '34-'35-'36, after the strike? Did the work change? Did the men have a sense that they could challenge supervisors if they were being unfair, that sort of stuff?

[00:43:19] **ROSCO:** Oh, yes, we did that. See, you ought to know, when we returned to work, that's when we made our best job conditions.

[00:43:24] **HOWARD:** Right.

[00:43:25] **ROSCO:** Because, well, as far as we're concerned, we won the strike. That was our attitude. We had a man sitting in the hiring hall to protect us. They couldn't discriminate now. If I went down on the job, and I said, "Look, here"—

Oh! I was telling you about the other time I was fired. I'll go back to that. I was down on the Luckenbach dock—not the Luckenbach dock, but the Admiral dock. We worked all day. We went to supper that night at five o'clock. We came back at six. Ten o'clock, I had to be working on the dock. That's what I had in the back of my mind. I worked on the dock very little because I was in a preferred gang, but I'd picked up this extra job. I'd been working for contracting stevedores in a steady gang. So at ten o'clock, I wanted to go eat again because it was hard work trucking paper. I had another four hours. They said, "We'll finish the job pretty quick." 10:30pm, we're still working. I could see we had a lot more. I said to Dan, "Where? I wanta go eat." He said, "Oh, no, we've got to finish this job. Don't need another half hour or hour." This kept going on till it counted twelve o'clock. I looked out there, and I said, "Listen, Dan, we've been working six hours, and I'm tired. We worked all day, and here it is, twelve o'clock at night. I'm going to go eat. I see you can't get through till 3:00am, 3:30am anyway." He said, "You go eat—you don't come back." I went to eat and I never got ten men to go with me.

[00:45:09] **HOWARD:** What happened?

[00:45:10] **ROSCO:** Nobody else would go with me.

[00:45:11] **HOWARD:** Nobody?

[00:45:11] **ROSCO:** I went by myself. He said, "You go eat; you don't come back." I said—

[00:45:15] **HOWARD:** Why? Were the other men afraid to go?



[00:45:16] **ROSCO:** They were afraid, see? This was before '34.

[00:45:21] **HOWARD:** Oh, it was before '34. Okay.

[00:45:21] **ROSCO:** So I found out afterwards that the boat didn't finish until 3:30am the next morning. Now, you see, that's the kind of conditions which brought on the strike. Now, they worked from six o'clock till 3:30 the next morning without even stopping to get a bite to eat.

[00:45:36] **HOWARD:** Now, the men would have been able to challenge that after '34, right?

[00:45:40] **ROSCO:** That's what I'm leading up to. So, now, after '34, let's say it's come ten o'clock. Well, then we want to go eat. "Oh, we got another hour." The men can see whether they got an hour or two hours. They'd go eat. And what could Dan do? They figured they had something to stand on. That's why we started on our job conditions. You ought to remember this—the employers had a hell of a good safety rules, but they didn't enforce the safety rules when they had them. Then, when we got back, with protection, we'd enforce those rules. See, we'd built a terrific union even before we got the decision down.

[00:46:19] **HOWARD:** Were you engaged in any work stoppages yourself after '34?

[00:46:23] **ROSCO:** Oh, I wouldn't want to say yes or no.

[00:46:28] **HOWARD:** Okay. Well, generally, men were engaged in work stoppages, right?

[00:46:34] **ROSCO:** Only for cause.

[00:46:35] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:46:36] **ROSCO:** When we felt we were right. See, you want to remember, a working man always cuts his hands.

[00:46:42] **HOWARD:** I know.

[00:46:44] **ROSCO:** That's only the law. He don't have the power of the courts and the judges to sit there. When we were mistreated, we had to take things into our own hands.

[00:46:55] **HOWARD:** And most of the beefs were over questions like sling load limits, safety violations, is that correct?

[00:47:03] **ROSCO:** Yes, I've seen load limits, my God, if I tell you, you wouldn't believe it. Three, four tons of, like, cement or something like that. They made the boards bigger and bigger all the time. [laughing] You see boards break with the extra heavy loads, and you must remember, too, back in those days, the machines hadn't come in, see? Let's say you and I are working out on the dock, and we had to keep the gear going with grain or something like that. Well, we had to go back and build our load, put it on a four-wheeler, and pull it out by hand. Maybe when they'd be discharging seamen coming up from California, they'd have so damn much on there you couldn't move the board on it. You like a goddamn horse out there.

[00:47:50] **HOWARD:** Do you remember what the sling load limit was reduced to after '34?

[00:47:54] **ROSCO:** If I recall correctly, it was 2,100 pounds.

[00:47:56] **HOWARD:** Yeah. San Francisco got it down to 1,800 at one point.

[00:47:59] **ROSCO:** It might have been.

[00:48:02] **HOWARD:** But I think you're right; 21 was coastwise.

[00:48:03] **ROSCO:** I think 21 was coastwise, if I recall correctly. It's been quite a while ago now.

[00:48:09] **HOWARD:** Could you just talk generally about the attitude of the men? They obviously were much—they felt they had much greater power after '34, right? Much greater ability to handle themselves?

[00:48:19] **ROSCO:** Oh, I wouldn't say that. It could be called that, but I'd put it another way. I'd say they were more assertive of their rights. Because they had rights, and they wanted the rights lived up to.

[00:48:32] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:48:32] **ROSCO:** It wasn't a question of power; it was a question of. . . If we had agreements, I don't know—I hear all the time about how we break agreements and so on. But to me, it don't look that way. The employer's always trying to force you in a little bit more and a little bit more. It comes to a point that you have to use your economic strength sometimes. That brings on a lot of so-called work stoppages and so forth.

[00:49:03] **HOWARD:** Was there any talk ever about a boycott of scrap iron out of Japan in Local 8? Do you remember?

[00:49:08] **ROSCO:** Oh, yes, yes. You ought to remember, back in the scrap iron days, oh hell, our international would go on record. Our boards would go on record, "No shipping scrap iron." I worked many a scrap iron job. We protested, and there'd be people out there protesting scrap iron. We'd have to do it under court orders and everything else.

[00:49:35] **HOWARD:** Who was protesting? You said that people were out there.

[00:49:37] **ROSCO:** Well, different organizations and churches. You'd almost have to live through that period to see who wasn't active in there. It's just like your anti-war people that's forming now. Look—I think there's an article in the paper today, for Christ's sake, if I remember right. Go look it up. The boy was just telling me it's in this morning's paper where some church—I just forget where he said now it was—there's Secretary [Caspar] Weinberger, head of Defense, is Episcopalian. He went to church, and the minister wouldn't let him because he said, "You're preaching going to war and nuclear weapons."

[00:50:15] **HOWARD:** Great.

[00:50:15] **ROSCO:** He said the article's in the paper today. I was just going to look it up when you came in.

[00:50:19] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[00:50:20] **ROSCO:** He said that was in the paper today. That's what I mean, you know. I attended a mass up here—I don't happen to be a Catholic, but I went to see a man up here in the [?Josephinian?], one of our pensioners. I was up there, went to mass with him. The cleric, he gave a hell of a talk on why we shouldn't support the administration on El Salvador. How the administration was wrong, and how those nuns was killed. He give a more radical talk than I could probably give, if you want to call it radical!

[00:50:56] **HOWARD:** [laughing] Yeah, right.

[00:50:57] **ROSCO:** So, you see, that's the kind of groups that you have now entering anti-war programs.

[00:51:03] **HOWARD:** Why didn't Local 8 take a stronger position on the scrap iron? Do you remember?

[00:51:07] **ROSCO:** I don't know what you're talking about, a stronger position.

[00:51:09] **HOWARD:** Well, they actually refused to handle it in San Francisco and Pedro. Do you remember that incident at all? It was—

[00:51:15] **ROSCO:** Well, we refused—

[00:51:16] **HOWARD:** —an actual work stoppage.

[00:51:17] **ROSCO:** Yeah, but we had work stoppages, as I recall it, and the courts ordered us to work.

[00:51:21] **HOWARD:** Did you? On scrap iron?

[00:51:22] **ROSCO:** On scrap iron.

[00:51:23] **HOWARD:** I never came across it. Maybe you're right. Just never got publicity, huh?

[00:51:28] **ROSCO:** If I recall it correctly, we had numerous stoppages on scrap iron.

[00:51:40] **HOWARD:** You did? Well, maybe I just never read that, then.

[00:51:45] **ROSCO:** I'd have to go back and get the old records and look all that up.

[00:51:48] **HOWARD:** Yeah, maybe I'll take a look at that. Okay. Now we're moving on to the war period. Were you here during the war? Or did you go into the service?

[00:51:56] **ROSCO:** Oh, I was here during the war.

[00:51:57] **HOWARD:** You were here. What was it like working on the waterfront during the war? Had the work changed at all?

[00:52:05] **ROSCO:** Well, I don't know how to classify that for you because the work changed all the time. Or, no war.

[00:52:10] **HOWARD:** Okay, let me ask this question: during the war, many union leaders, especially Bridges, were arguing that we had to essentially cooperate with the employers for the national unity against the fascists. So at one point Bridges came out with a very famous statement that was widely quoted, that "unions have to become an instrument of the speed-up." I'm wondering—he advocated reducing or stopping the sling load limits on cement, for instance, and a few things like that. I'm wondering if the work process became—

[00:52:42] **ROSCO:** Where'd you read that?

[00:52:43] **HOWARD:** That's public record stuff. It's a famous quote of his. He said, "Your union has to become an instrument of the speed-up." I can show it to you if you'd like.

[00:52:53] **ROSCO:** Well, you know, it might be taken out of context. Because I've been vice president of the international from 1941-1945.

[00:52:59] **HOWARD:** Oh, you were? Oh, that's right! That's where I saw your name. That's right. Okay. Now I remember. I knew your name before I came up here; I didn't remember where I saw it! Okay. You don't remember that statement at all?

[00:53:11] **ROSCO:** I don't even recall that statement, and I don't recall any speed-up.

[00:53:14] **HOWARD:** You don't? Were you working on the waterfront then? I guess you were in international office then, right?

[00:53:17] **ROSCO:** I was an international officer. I do know this, thought—we gave all-out effort to the war effort. We did. I helped recruit a lot of men to the Seabees [U.S. Naval Construction Battalions, C.B.] and stuff like that. I don't recall trying to break load limits. I don't recall trying to speed-up in that sense of the word. I don't recall anything like that. But I recall trying to get all efficiency and stuff like that we could. That's why I'm saying, those things—

[00:53:46] **HOWARD:** It's a fine line.

[00:53:46] **ROSCO:** —came out of context someplace because, as far as the war effort, we devoted everything possible to the war effort. But our biggest hang-up with the goddamn war effort all the way through was the damn Army and Navy and all. I remember one time when the Army and Navy was fighting so damn bad up here that I had to call a meeting up in the arcade building and get the Army officers and the Navy officers to come up there in my office to get them to sit down and talk together to get them to speed-up the war effort! So, Jesus Christ, to hear those kinds of statements floors me.

[00:54:22] **HOWARD:** Well, there is a fine line between being efficient and speeding up, right?

[00:54:26] **ROSCO:** That's right. Because, I'll tell you, I don't recall those statements at all.

[00:54:32] **HOWARD:** Have you read Charles Larrowe's book, Harry Bridges? Have you seen that? It's been out about five years. It's called Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of the Radical Labor Leader? Never saw that?

[00:54:44] **ROSCO:** I think I—

[00:54:45] **HOWARD:** It got a lot of coverage.

[00:54:46] **ROSCO:** I read so much damn stuff pro and con on Bridges, it'd make you sick. Taken out of context and—

[00:54:53] **HOWARD:** See, the reason I'm interested in this, I'll tell you. Just step back for a second. One of the explanations why the left in this country failed in the labor movement, the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] was expelled and all that stuff, was they said that they pushed class collaboration during the war. They told the workers to forget the union, push, push, push. Then after the war—no? After the war—let me just run it down—after the war—this is the explanation for what happened in the UE [United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America], for instance. After the war, the IUE [International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers] could say, "Look, you guys sold us out during the war."

[00:55:19] **ROSCO:** Nah.

[00:55:20] **HOWARD:** No? You don't buy that? I don't it either, after talking to you guys.

[00:55:24] **ROSCO:** I don't buy it.

[00:55:27] **HOWARD:** The Trots made that sort of an argument, right? From the left, Trotskyites and stuff?

[00:55:32] **ROSCO:** Contradictions on Bridges is terrific, so much that I've gotten to the point I don't—let me just get you straight on one thing. Bridges and I are the best of personal friends to this day. I knew Bridges when Bridges first came here before he was even president of the 'Frisco [San Francisco, California] local. I was secretary of the Portland local back in seventy—you ought to remember, Portland local is 8. That's the first big local to go CIO.

[00:56:04] **HOWARD:** Oh, it was?

[00:56:04] **ROSCO:** Well, 8.

[00:56:05] **HOWARD:** That's right—I never thought about that.

[00:56:09] **ROSCO:** Our numbers come as the locals went CIO. We're ahead of 10 'Frisco, 13 Wilmington [California] .

[00:56:16] **HOWARD:** What was Local 1?

[00:56:18] **ROSCO:** Local 1's a little town of Raymond over here.

[00:56:20] **HOWARD:** Raymond, Washington. That's strange.

[00:56:22] **ROSCO:** Well, you see, when we held the board meeting, locals that went CIO was to be assigned the numbers as they applied for the charter. I'd been secretary of the Portland local, and we put on a good drive in Portland. We was the first one to get under the wire. We had a hell of a good, strong local and what you want to call "a Bridges local," if you want to call it that.

[00:56:45] **HOWARD:** It was a Bridges local at that time, pretty much?

[00:56:46] **ROSCO:** Strong, strong. We're right up in the hotbed, up there in the Northwest with the timber workers and so on. Strikes around us all the time, everywhere. So, anyway, knowing Harry, and I kinda know Harry, I can't stomach some of that stuff that they do print about him. I guess that's one reason I don't read too much of this Bridges crap—because I read so damn much stuff. Unless somebody wants me to interpret something for them. That's the only time I pay attention to it.

[00:57:20] **HOWARD:** That's all I'm asking for, is an interpretation, really.

[00:57:23] **ROSCO:** Harry, he writes me even today.

[00:57:26] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[00:57:28] **ROSCO:** We're the best of friends. I was down to his house just a couple months ago. Harry's very—all the way through—he'll take help from anybody. He don't give a damn whether it's a communist or a Republican or a Democrat or a socialist or what. As long as they're working trying to put over and protect his union.

[00:57:52] **HOWARD:** Okay, let me ask you a question about that. Bridges you would classify as a radical, wouldn't you?

[00:57:56] **ROSCO:** No.

[00:57:56] **HOWARD:** You wouldn't? [incredulous]

[00:57:57] **ROSCO:** No, he's no radical. It's what you wanted to term a radical.

[00:58:01] **HOWARD:** Well, within the American labor movement, he's on the left. Left of center, certainly.

[00:58:05] **ROSCO:** You call it the left when you want all men to be created equal? You call that left?

[00:58:09] **HOWARD:** Why are you sensitive about that? I think it's great. I don't think it's anything to be ashamed of.

[00:58:14] **ROSCO:** I'm not ashamed of it. To me, I'm trying to find out what you call a radical.

[00:58:19] **HOWARD:** This guy came out—

[00:58:20] **ROSCO:** I know, but I'm trying to find out what the hell you call a radical!

[00:58:22] **HOWARD:** Okay, that's a difficult question, I agree. But he took positions on foreign and domestic policy that were critical of a conservative administration. He was opposed to the Cold War; he was opposed to the Korean—

[00:58:32] **ROSCO:** Is anything wrong with being critical—

[00:58:34] **HOWARD:** No, I'm not saying it's wrong! I think it's great!

[00:58:36] **ROSCO:** But why call him a radical?

[00:58:38] **HOWARD:** Well, how would you call it, if you wanted to distinguish him from George Meany or somebody like that? Clearly—at least before 1950, when Bridges was sort of identified with the left.

[00:58:47] **ROSCO:** See, but when you see the term “radical”—

[00:58:52] **HOWARD:** It means something different to you than it does to me, obviously.

[00:58:55] **ROSCO:** That's the point I'm trying to get, see?

[00:58:57] **HOWARD:** You have bad images associated with that word, and I don't at all. “Radical” literally means getting to the root. That's what the word means. Anyone who gets to the root is a guy like Bridges who says, “The problem here is fundamental. The system itself is not delivering to the people.”

[00:59:11] **ROSCO:** Well, if you want to use that term, I can go with you on that.

[00:59:13] **HOWARD:** Okay. We agree!

[00:59:14] **ROSCO:** I gotta know how you defined a radical. But you see—

[00:59:17] **HOWARD:** Bridges talked about the need for socialism in this country. Don't you think that's a radical stance to take?

[00:59:23] **ROSCO:** Well . . .

[00:59:26] **HOWARD:** If it isn't, what would you characterize it as?

[00:59:29] **ROSCO:** If you want to call it a viewpoint that's different to most of the people in the country, maybe you could call it a radical viewpoint. Like, it depends, let's say the Negro. Bridges believes in the rights of the Negro same as a white man, or a Pole, or a Chinaman, or any of the rest. In fact, he's married to a Japanese woman.

[00:59:52] **HOWARD:** And he fought for that more consistently than just about any labor leader in the country.

[00:59:55] **ROSCO:** That's right. Now, if you want to call those things radical, I'd say he's a radical alright.

[00:59:59] **HOWARD:** What would you call them? Would you put any label on them at all?

[01:00:03] **ROSCO:** Well, I—

[01:00:04] **HOWARD:** He's certainly different.

[01:00:05] **ROSCO:** I don't call them radical.

[01:00:09] **HOWARD:** You would say progressive or something, right?

[01:00:10] **ROSCO:** Well, frankly, I'm so damn disgusted with these terms: conservatives, ultra-conservatives, ah Christ.

[01:00:19] **HOWARD:** But you use them, right? What do you call Reagan?

[01:00:23] **ROSCO:** Reagan?

[01:00:25] **HOWARD:** He's a reactionary. He's a conservative, whatever you want to call him, right?

See, it's funny because—let me just tell you—because I've been agonizing over this problem, what these words mean. In the political world, we have no trouble labeling people. But, when it comes to the labor movement, all of a sudden we can't label anymore. You know? I don't understand that. Bridges was on the left. When he steps in the voting booth, he's usually on the left.

[01:00:45] **ROSCO:** You wanted to know what I'd call Reagan. I'd call him a rhinestone cowboy.

[01:00:50] **HOWARD:** What does that mean?

[01:00:52] **ROSCO:** [laughing] He's a B actor, and the—

[END PART TWO/BEGIN PART THREE]

[01:00:58] **HOWARD:** Let me just ask you a couple questions about the war, and then we'll move on to the final section here. There was a big influx of men during the war, wasn't there? New workers?

[01:01:09] **ROSCO:** Well, yes, because, see, a lot of our men went into the services.

[01:01:15] **HOWARD:** How many went in? Do you have any idea?

[01:01:17] **ROSCO:** I have no idea.

[01:01:18] **HOWARD:** Absolutely, wouldn't even want to venture a guess?

[01:01:19] **ROSCO:** I wouldn't even want to venture because—I'm even surprised today. Every once in a while, I'll run into a man, and he starts telling me about France or something. I don't even think about him being in the service. See, even with pensioners, go in there with the war babies, too, see?

[01:01:36] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[01:01:39] **ROSCO:** Kinda strikes you funny. Now that you've been working on the docks, let's say, for the last 20 or 30 years, and you forgot all about it, him even being in the service, or didn't even miss anybody who was in the service. You come in and go pass so-and-so. They get going, talking about old times. Like the president of my union here. I never even give it a thought about him being in the service till we got talking about it here some time ago. Hits you right between here, well, he's a guy who was all through the war and everything else.

[01:02:13] **HOWARD:** Did they bring in a lot of new workers during the war?

[01:02:17] **ROSCO:** Well, they had to bring in quite a few. Oh, I don't know, now Portland didn't do so much. See, Portland—Wilmington and Seattle and Frisco was predominant.

[01:02:43] **HOWARD:** So there was lots of work done in Seattle, you think?

[01:02:45] **ROSCO:** Lots of work done in Seattle. I wouldn't want to hazard a guess on how many.

[01:02:59] **HOWARD:** As far as you know, the work process, the actual work didn't change that much during the war? At least along the lines I'm talking about—

[01:03:06] **ROSCO:** I don't see that because the load limits and stuff like that you're talking about. What we tried to do—I'm speaking union position, international position, because I was in the international—what we were trying to do at that time was have it more effective, efficient. You want to remember we put in the 10-hour day and things like that, which we didn't like to do. See, we worked two shifts, 10 hours a shift. I don't know how else to describe it to you. It was all more on the efficiency line. I don't recall breaking load limits. I don't recall any hullabaloo about things like that or anything.

[01:03:58] **HOWARD:** Well, that's what I want to ask because, I mean—

[01:04:01] **ROSCO:** See, I was in a position where I'm more or less in charge of all the Northwest ports, and I don't recall anything of that kind.

[01:04:10] **HOWARD:** Were longshoremen given occupational deferments during the war? Or did it depend on the kind of job you had? Do you remember any of this?

[01:04:17] **ROSCO:** Well, I don't remember us getting occupational deferments.

[01:04:21] **HOWARD:** None of the key men, or anything so called, none of the winch drivers?

[01:04:24] **ROSCO:** No, I don't remember any of them getting it on that basis. We might have got more gas and things like that on account of making our jobs and so forth. I don't recall any occupational deferments.

[01:04:45] **HOWARD:** You wouldn't even want to guess how many guys were drafted or anything like that?

[01:04:48] **ROSCO:** No, because that—see, the employers could come out and say there were so many, he's way off his beam or something like that.



[01:04:55] **HOWARD:** I don't have any other figure.

[01:04:56] **ROSCO:** No, but I wouldn't want to say that—see, all those people who handled those figures are dead.

[01:05:04] **HOWARD:** I know.

[01:05:05] **ROSCO:** They're all dead. It's just like I said—we might have went up to 2,500 men maybe here. But, hell, look at the way our local's going now since the war with attrition and labor-saving devices. I think the boys were telling me here the other day we're down about 600 men.

[01:05:23] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:05:25] **ROSCO:** When I was secretary of the Portland local—now I'm speaking prior to the war years—Seattle and Portland, we had about, roughly, 1,500-1,800 men each. During the war, a lot of the Portland men had to come up to Seattle to work because Portland, [has] the Columbia Bar, and the big ships [can't get around it] , and so on. More of the war cargo was concentrated here in the Puget Sound and the Bay area. A lot of the Portland men went to Frisco to work, and a lot of the Portland men went to Seattle to work. Maybe the membership might have went up to maybe, say, 2,500 but I have no way of saying it did or it didn't.

[01:06:10] **HOWARD:** Now, the reason the Portland local didn't have much work is because what? There just wasn't many shipments coming into Portland?

[01:06:16] **ROSCO:** Well, see, your military cargo—you want to remember your military was running things pretty much then. So where they wanted to concentrate it was like in Seattle, the deep water ports and Frisco.

[01:06:28] **HOWARD:** Portland is too shallow to handle some of these?

[01:06:29] **ROSCO:** Portland's got that Columbia River crossing. Now, let's say, if they dynamited the Columbia River Bar, how in the hell could you get a ship out?

[01:06:38] **HOWARD:** I see.

[01:06:40] **ROSCO:** I'm just guessing at the reason.

[01:06:41] **HOWARD:** That seems reasonable. Werner was saying later on in the war, by '43, work really picked up in Portland. They were hiring all kinds of people, but—you don't remember that, or?

[01:06:51] **ROSCO:** Well, they might have picked up all kinds of people but it wasn't built up even to the pre-war strike.

[01:06:55] **HOWARD:** Oh really?

[01:06:56] **ROSCO:** Because a lot of their men, what didn't go in the services, went to Frisco—we had a lot of men up here go to Seattle, a lot of men go to Frisco.

[01:07:07] **HOWARD:** Okay. Alright, I think that's all I have to ask on the war. Nothing else I can think of. One other question—did men start working off of the plug boards during the war? Somebody suggested that they did, that there was a greater tendency to work out of the hall than to go out on a steady gang sort of arrangement. Do you remember any of that?

[01:07:34] **ROSCO:** Well—

[01:07:34] **HOWARD:** Because what I'm trying to get at is you obviously had a lot of green men coming into the union at that time. I'm wondering what that did to the morale of the men or the sense of solidarity they built up in their gangs. Because you had a constant turnover of men in a gang.

[01:07:48] **ROSCO:** I couldn't answer those questions because, you want to remember, I'm in office up town.

[01:07:59] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[01:08:00] **ROSCO:** Overall, see, and the men you'd have to talk to on those things would be dispatchers at that time. Even at that, I don't remember any beefs over it, see. If there was any big deal, I should have heard about it.

[01:08:13] **HOWARD:** I would think so.

[01:08:15] **ROSCO:** I don't recall any beefs. See, you want to remember—take this off here because I don't want to—

[break in recording of interview]

[01:08:26] **HOWARD:** Now I want to ask about the 1948 strike. Were you in Portland still at that time?

[01:08:31] **ROSCO:** I was in Portland at that time.

[01:08:33] **HOWARD:** What do you remember about that strike, anything?

[01:08:35] **ROSCO:** Oh, I don't remember anything in particular. I don't want to be quoted on anything on that 1948 strike because I wasn't in a position to—well, I didn't try to be active in it or anything.

[01:08:48] **HOWARD:** Is there a reason for not being active?

[01:08:52] **ROSCO:** Oh, no, in fact . . .

[break in recording of interview]

[01:09:01] **HOWARD:** One thing I wanted to talk to you about is after the war, between, say, '48-50, '52 even, in several of the locals up and down the coast, there were factionalism developing in the union. Bridges was taking controversial stands, or what appeared to be controversial stands on Korea and on screening in particular. Do you remember any kind of factionalism in Local 8 at that time?

[01:09:22] **ROSCO:** Well, if you want to call it factionalism, I'd say it's a difference in belief. You want to remember Korea coming into it. I was very strong myself talking against sending ammunitions and stuff to Korea.

[01:09:39] **HOWARD:** Oh, you were?

[01:09:42] **ROSCO:** In fact, I never did get a Navy pass on account of my beliefs and all.

[01:09:48] **HOWARD:** You were screened, then.

[01:09:48] **ROSCO:** I was screened out. See, my beliefs—the FBI followed me around and everything—here’s the president now. [presumably showing something to Howard]

[01:10:00] **HOWARD:** I heard about him. Gordon mentioned him. So you were telling me about you being screened off?

[01:10:05] **ROSCO:** Oh, no, I said I was screened off. I don’t know yet. I never did bother about writing the State department or any of the rest of them. I never did get a Navy pass.

[01:10:14] **HOWARD:** So, your position on Korea was that they shouldn’t send ammunition?

[01:10:17] **ROSCO:** Sure, I didn’t believe in the war in Korea because it looked to me like a civil war in a country, North and South Korea.

[01:10:24] **HOWARD:** That was a more radical position than even Bridges took.

[01:10:27] **ROSCO:** Well, that, to me, was an internal fight and we had no business sticking our nose into any of those things. That’s my way of looking at it and always has been.

[01:10:35] **HOWARD:** How did the rank and file respond to that?

[01:10:38] **ROSCO:** Your rank and file is divided on those things. Because you have those who wanted to make the ammunition pay and make the big money and so on. Then they always have those who want to follow the flag wherever the flag goes. I look at it where the flag goes, a lot of the time it’s gone there by the instigation of big business and oil companies and so forth. We have no goddamn business being there. So that was my position.

[01:11:04] **HOWARD:** Was that a popular position?

[01:11:06] **ROSCO:** Not during the Korean War.

[01:11:09] **HOWARD:** I can’t believe it was. No, not with McCarthyism and everything.

[01:11:12] **ROSCO:** You want to remember, McCarthy was right at his height then with his red-baiting and everything else. It was very unpopular.

[01:11:19] **HOWARD:** Do you remember if they ever ran anti-Bridges—they must have, obviously, run anti-Bridges people in Local 8, right? For local office?

[01:11:29] **ROSCO:** Portland always did—I say “always,” Portland several different times ran anti-Bridges people. But, hell’s fire, they never got to first base. Even the Portland local, to my memory, always elected Bridges even over the local man that ran against him.

[01:11:47] **HOWARD:** Yeah, they did. Baker ran—wasn’t that the name? Yeah, he lost, Ernie Baker, even in Portland.

[01:11:51] **ROSCO:** Not Ernie Baker, it was Bob Baker.

[01:11:53] **HOWARD:** Yeah, Bob Baker, I’m sorry. Let me sort of tie it all together here at the end, then. One of the questions of the research I talked about earlier was why a guy like Bridges could be as durable as he was.

How he stayed around as long as he did. Before we get to your final answer to that, let me ask you a few questions.

Who was most likely to support Bridges—older or younger men? Or did it break down that way? Like, were ‘34 men more supportive of Bridges?

[01:12:20] **ROSCO:** Oh yes, yes.

[01:12:21] **HOWARD:** They were?

[01:12:21] **ROSCO:** ‘34 men—you want to remember, your ‘34 men went way back. Take your ‘34 men on up, let’s say, to the war, are more supportive of Bridges because they know Bridges the best. They know what he accomplished. They know what he did. The ones since then coming in are more under the influence—your later generation—on rumors and instigation. They’re instigated by rumors and so on. That’s where more of your anti-Bridges, if you want to call it that, anti-Bridges climate.

[01:12:54] **HOWARD:** Were they the war babies pretty much?

[01:12:57] **ROSCO:** You take your average longshoreman. I mean your solid longshoreman. They’re all Bridges’ men. Or Bridges’ beliefs. That’s what kept Bridges in power.

[01:13:09] **HOWARD:** Even in the late forties and early fifties?

[01:13:12] **ROSCO:** Didn’t he stay in there right up until—

[01:13:13] **HOWARD:** He did, but most of the locals, like in Local 10 [James] Kearney came into office. He was violently opposed to most of what Bridges said.

[01:13:20] **ROSCO:** I know, but your individuals in the local can be anti-Bridges, but when it comes to the vote of the local, they’d vote for Bridges.

[01:13:29] **HOWARD:** How do you explain that?

[01:13:31] **ROSCO:** That’s easy. If I want to campaign here in one of these locals, I go down to the rank and file and tell every fucking—pardon me.

[01:13:39] **HOWARD:** That’s okay. [chuckles]

[01:13:40] **ROSCO:** In other words, everything I could about the other man and run the other man down all I could. Even if I made up a little stuff. Because you’re campaigning on a personal issue. But when it comes to campaigning on the fundamentals, that’s where Bridges gets his support in the overall.

[01:13:54] **HOWARD:** But, what, well it’s a different situation in Local 10. I know that best, I guess. Kearney campaigns on an anti-Bridges plank. He says “Bridges is a Red; Bridges did this in Korea; Bridges did this on screening. Vote for me, and I oppose all this instances, right?” So they vote for Kearney, and then the rank and file turns around and votes for Bridges. I don’t understand how they can do that. [chuckles]

[01:14:11] **ROSCO:** It’s there. The record’s there.

[01:14:13] **HOWARD:** It’s there. I just can’t—

[01:14:14] **UNIDENTIFIED VOICE:** Line 3, Rosco.

[01:14:15] **ROSCO:** I can't answer you on that—

[break in recording of interview]

'51 or '52, someplace in there. I think it's 1952.

[01:14:15] **HOWARD:** Can I ask you why you did that?

[01:14:24] **ROSCO:** Yes. Turn that off, though, I don't want to put—

[break in recording of interview]

[01:14:27] **HOWARD:** Just a couple more questions and we'll be done. You said the '34 men tended to be a little more loyal to Bridges.

[break in recording of interview]

Were there any—how about religious differences among the men? Were Catholics likely to be more supportive of Bridges than non-Catholics, or did you ever think about that?

[01:14:43] **ROSCO:** I never did run into the religious question anyways.

[01:14:45] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I guess in Local 10 there were some ACTU people, Association of Catholic Trade Unionists.

[01:14:50] **ROSCO:** Well, I'll tell you, there's two things I won't talk to people about. One is your doctor, and the other is religion. Whatever your religion is, I don't give a damn.

[01:14:59] **HOWARD:** I never heard of that one. It's always politics and religion, isn't it? [laughing]

[01:15:03] **ROSCO:** No, I'll talk politics but I won't talk doctors. I won't tell you to go this doctor or that doctor. Because the doctor you like, I might hate his guts.

[01:15:10] **HOWARD:** Right.

[01:15:11] **ROSCO:** Same way of religion. If you're a Catholic, maybe I hate a Catholic. Or Protestant? Maybe I hate a Protestant. That's two things I won't talk.

[01:15:18] **HOWARD:** Well, how would you characterize the men who were sort of anti-Bridges in the early fifties? Was there something about them that made them that way? I'm trying to figure out why, you know, the union might split—not split—but why some guys would be real loyal to Bridges and some wouldn't be.

[01:15:34] **ROSCO:** Well, why some guys chose him to be president, some guys against it. Or some guys loyal to me me to be secretary, some against. Those are things you can't think.

[01:15:41] **HOWARD:** You ever think about why that was?

[01:15:42] **ROSCO:** I never bothered the heck with it. Because those are things you can't fathom. Can you tell me why I support Jugum [Martin Jugum, Local] for president?

[01:15:50] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I think so. Because of your Wobbly experience as a youth—I think that has a big impact on you.

[01:15:56] **ROSCO:** Well, why would I be against him, then?

[01:15:58] **HOWARD:** Were you against him?

[01:15:59] **ROSCO:** Well, I—

[01:16:00] **HOWARD:** No, you weren't!

[01:16:01] **ROSCO:** [laughing] No, but I thought it was funny!

[01:16:02] **HOWARD:** That's the point. See, the thing is, people are not random. People do things for reasons, right? They oppose Bridges for a reason, and they support Bridges for a reason. I'm trying to figure out what those reasons are. Like, in Local 10, I can tell you exactly. If you tell me the color of the person, how old they are, and whether they work in the hold or on the dock, I can tell you whether they were pro-Bridges or not, with pretty good accuracy. It breaks down like that. In Local 13, it's similar. There are the relevant, different things you take into account.

[01:16:32] **DOUG:** In other words, you're saying that there isn't any pro-Bridges people left.

[01:16:38] **HOWARD:** No, no, I'm not saying that at all.

[01:16:40] **DOUG:** You said the hold people and the guy who works on deck—the hold people always were for Bridges. We were the minority.

[01:16:50] **HOWARD:** I'm really looking back in the fifties, though. I'm trying to figure out the fifties when—Bridges was controversial then. He really was.

[01:17:00] **DOUG:** No, Bridges was too far ahead of his time.

[01:17:03] **HOWARD:** Well, that made him controversial, didn't it?

[01:17:05] **ROSCO:** [laughing]

[01:17:05] **DOUG:** Well, I don't know about that. I mean, if a guy's ahead of his time, and controversial but I want you out of the way, it's different from being controversial and having a guy out of the way.

[01:17:22] **HOWARD:** Yeah, okay, that's true. But there were pro and anti-Bridges groups in the locals, that's all. Isn't that true, or not? Maybe I'm wrong.

[01:17:31] **DOUG:** That's the American system.

[01:17:33] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I think it's good. It's healthy. It builds democracy.

[01:17:36] **DOUG:** Sometimes it is; sometimes it isn't. Sometimes you take a guy—if he's ahead of his time, he can't drag this load and they drag him down.

[01:17:48] **HOWARD:** Yeah. Let me ask you—are you from Local 19, sort of going back longer?

[01:17:55] **DOUG:** I'm from Local 19.

[01:17:57] **HOWARD:** When did you start?

[01:17:58] **DOUG:** Here?

[01:17:59] **HOWARD:** Yeah, Local 19.

[01:18:02] **DOUG:** During the war.

[01:18:02] **HOWARD:** During the war. Local 19 is usually characterized as one of the more conservative locals along the coast. Is that true?

[01:18:10] **DOUG:** I wouldn't say so.

[01:18:10] **HOWARD:** You wouldn't? Would you?

[01:18:10] **ROSCO:** See, there we're kinda right down to that same thing as what radicals are.

[01:18:17] **DOUG:** What can I say? I mean, the record is there on the caucuses and the conventions, what positions Local 19 has taken. If they're conservative, that sure in the hell is a different slant than I ever heard. If you see the petitions, they'd take positions that they were holding down.

[01:18:43] **ROSCO:** Are you talking on the political front now?

[01:18:45] **HOWARD:** I think so. I don't even know anymore. My understanding is that Local 13 and Local 19 are real militant when it comes to trade union questions. But that you tend to be conservative when it comes to political questions, like the Korean War perhaps, or the Vietnam War, or whatever it was.

[01:19:01] **ROSCO:** Well, I think that holds true. Because you take your northern locals—all your northern locals are not into politics like they are down south.

[01:19:07] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[01:19:08] **ROSCO:** If you want it put that way.

[01:19:10] **HOWARD:** In 'Frisco, at least.

[01:19:11] **ROSCO:** Howard, what Doug was interpreting for you there was, he thought you meant their politically conservative stand as far as the union's concerned, when it comes to protection of the members of the union and that viewpoint. When it comes to politics, I think the 'Frisco local on any political question takes a more open stand than any other local on the coast, and more stands. Because politics is not discussed in the unions up north the same as they are in the 'Frisco local. I think that holds true also for 13.

[01:19:42] **HOWARD:** Do you think that's just Bridges' influence in Local 10? Still around there?

[01:19:49] **ROSCO:** Well, it goes clear back, I guess, to '34. They've been more in politics. They were able to get the general strike and so on. The town is more political itself. You even got the gay movement down there now. You've got no gay movements up here.

[01:20:10] **HOWARD:** Though Seattle had one of the most radical AF of L's [American Federation of Labor] right after World War I. They were almost expelled from the international.

[01:20:18] **DOUG:** Talking about the fifties and the Korean War, don't forget one thing. There was a recession in '47, strike in '48. Not too much pick up until '49. Then the Korean scrimmage came up, and there wasn't—don't look at it as a war. You don't fight in defensive battle in a war. At least I don't. I mean, if you have a war, you go out to win; you don't play checkers.

[01:20:48] **HOWARD:** What was your position on the Korean War at that time?

[01:20:57] **DOUG:** On the Korean War? My position at the Korean War—it happened at the time was either if you're going to go in, go in and win. If you're not going to go in, get the hell out of there. That's it.

[01:21:04] **HOWARD:** [to Rosco] That was different from your position.

[01:21:07] **ROSCO:** I was against the Korean War altogether.

[01:21:09] **DOUG:** Well, if it's the political end of it, they say, if you're going to have a war, you got to have something to have a war on it. You gotta hate the enemy, though. I was in World War II, so I might have a different slant than he has. I don't like to be brainwashed; I think Americans have already been brainwashed enough.

[01:21:27] **ROSCO:** [laughing]

[01:21:27] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I agree with you there.

[01:21:32] **DOUG:** Probably brainwashed more than anybody in the world. Point of it is, when you go there, if you got everybody to hoopty-do, then do the hoopty-doo! Never mind all this political hay. After you win, then you got the political hay, like after World War II was over, we tried to buy the world. We haven't bought it yet.

[01:21:56] **HOWARD:** Mm-hmm, that's right. Let me ask you a couple more questions, okay, about screening. You weren't screened, were you? In the Coast Guard screening?

[01:22:04] **DOUG:** What do you mean, screening?

[01:22:05] **HOWARD:** You weren't screened off, though, or denied a pass, were you?

[01:22:08] **DOUG:** Everyone I know was.

[01:22:09] **HOWARD:** You were denied a pass, too?

[01:22:10] **DOUG:** Not a Coast Guard, an Army pass.

[01:22:13] **HOWARD:** An Army pass. Did they ever give you the reasons for that?

[01:22:13] **DOUG:** At one time. They do not give you reasons for nothing. I happened to be during that time—was in '42 when they screened—well, anyway, there was a girl who screened me. I went over, they took my pass away. I says, "How come they took my pass away. Who've you got me mixed up with?" I says, "I got a clean record." I said, "Ahh!" All I know is that I come from Grey's Harbor [Washington] .

[01:22:55] **HOWARD:** Which meant what?



[01:22:56] **DOUG:** Which meant Aberdeen, which meant Gray's Harbor, which had martial law in 1935. In '35 was a strike.

[01:23:05] **ROSCO:** Timber workers' strike.

[01:23:06] **DOUG:** Timber workers' strike. Anybody came from there was screened.

[01:23:12] **HOWARD:** Hmm. That's interesting. So they followed you guys closely. Good records.

[01:23:18] **ROSCO:** [laughing]

[01:23:18] **DOUG:** I don't know if they followed up closely or not. But anyway, I got my passport.

[01:23:24] **HOWARD:** Yeah, you did. How many people in Local 19 or Local 8 were screened? Or denied passes by the Coast Guard? Do you have any idea?

[01:23:33] **ROSCO:** No.

[01:23:35] **HOWARD:** There were at least a few in Local 19.

[01:23:36] **DOUG:** There was a few, but the point of it is guys that's been here—maybe they were immigrants. They raised their family, work hard, sent their kids to college, paid taxes. Some of their kids went to service; some went to college. I could never understand why they screened them. It looked to me like they were pretty good citizens. Damn good citizens. But anyway, when the powers that be up above—I happened to be the business agent in '53-'54 when they had this screening program going on, I tried to find out what it was all about. The guy at the head of the 13th naval base at the Pier 90 and 91. [Inaudible] I asked him, "What have you got on these guys?" He says, "If they want to know, they've got to go to court." Who the hell's going to go through the United States government? [Inaudible] to do that?

[01:24:49] **HOWARD:** Were they some of the more militant guys in the union or—

[01:24:51] **DOUG:** No.

[01:24:52] **HOWARD:** Not necessarily?

[01:24:53] **DOUG:** No, that's right. The guy would just sit there, smoke his pipe, and do his job.

[01:24:59] **HOWARD:** Is that right?

[01:25:01] **DOUG:** Mind his own business, never say. You wouldn't even know he was in a union; he would just sit there. Minding his own business.

[01:25:11] **ROSCO:** But you think I should be screened? Just from what little bit you talked to me here?

[01:25:15] **HOWARD:** No, but I can see why they might have. Because they sort of associated you with the left, right? I mean, everybody tells me, "Go see Craycraft, the big left-winger up in Seattle," so . . . [laughing]

[01:25:25] **ROSCO:** [laughing] I told him I didn't even know I was a left-winger, for Christ's sake!

[01:25:29] **DOUG:** Christ, Rosco, you might have been an ex-punk who had a hell of a left hook! [laughing]

[01:25:34] **HOWARD:** Whatever. It didn't take much, I realize that.

Okay, let me both ask you the final question of the study—how did Bridges stay around as long as he did?

[01:25:51] **DOUG:** I tried to tell you—he was far ahead of his time. By the time you started examining his idea—he's too far ahead of his time. For instance, 1946. I just got out of the service and come back for a meeting. He's talking about getting rid of the six and eight. Go straight eight hours. Instead of the six and two, you get the basic wage then, and then you start company hours. Now the majority couldn't see that. [Inaudible] "Six and two, what are you talking about?" [Inaudible 00:25:46-00:26:13]

I'm sure the majority of the ranks weren't keeping up with him. Number three: 1951 he's talking about pensions, vacations, welfare, medical programs. A guy says, "How's he going to do that? It's a casual industry." Guys said, "We don't want that. Give us money in the hand." '52 he got it. He casualized this thing. Got us the hours to work—

[01:27:52] **HOWARD:** You're basically saying Bridges delivered the goods, right?

[01:27:55] **DOUG:** Right.

[01:27:56] **HOWARD:** Okay. Now, the problem with that explanation—you got something more to say?

[01:28:01] **DOUG:** Go ahead, go ahead.

[01:28:01] **HOWARD:** The problem with that explanation is as follows—and that's what everyone tells me. They tell me two things: Bridges had absolute integrity—which I think is probably true—and he delivered the goods. I say that's okay, but then how come the other left-wing leaders in this country failed? The UE lost, and they had good leaders; they delivered the goods. Mine, Mill [International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers] ultimately lost. They had good leaders; they delivered the goods. Only the ILWU survived without any people leaving the union.

[01:28:24] **DOUG:** You know why?

[01:28:25] **HOWARD:** Why?

[01:28:26] **DOUG:** Bridges wore the same kind of a suit as he did in '34 in 1950 and 1964. He used to sleep in fleabag hotels. He didn't have any \$250 suit at that time.

[01:28:42] **HOWARD:** Guys in the UE didn't either. The guys in the UE lived very humble lifestyles.

[01:28:47] **DOUG:** They must have—I'm sure when they come to Seattle, they went and hired the Stewart Hotel.

[01:28:53] **HOWARD:** Well, maybe, I don't know. I heard Bridges dressed real nice, too, I don't know.

[01:28:58] **ROSCO:** Bridges's got his original suits, I think.

[01:29:02] **DOUG:** Bridges was clean.

[01:29:04] **ROSCO:** That's right.

[01:29:05] **HOWARD:** Yeah, I've heard that, and I agree.

[01:29:09] **DOUG:** Clean, nice-shaven, bath all the time. His shoes had nice patterns. He was a little guy. They weren't too expensive.

[01:29:20] **HOWARD:** Do you go with that explanation pretty much?

[01:29:22] **ROSCO:** Yeah, I knew Bridges—I think Bridges' got his first gray suit, for Christ's sakes. [laughing] You know, Bridges was one of the tightest bastards.

[01:29:32] **DOUG:** He was always an underdog fighter. He was always for the underdog. He's the guy that said "The hold man and the deck man and the guy that working down in the hold—he should get the raise or the same wages. There shouldn't be any differentiation." There're a majority of guys down there—there's eight in the hold, two on deck, at that particular time, and two in the sling. That makes ten. That ain't too hard to figure out. When it comes to fighting for this guy out here, who eventually might get the control because he's smart enough during the delegation of the caucus. Very few of the underprivileged in the hold were in the caucus because they were in the minority. At least Bridges stuck up for them. This was his idea or principle of a union. And I agree.

[01:30:39] **HOWARD:** Okay. Is it possible that he brought the men along politically with his ideas at all? Did they agree? Was there a large number that eventually began to see things his way?

[01:30:53] **DOUG:** I think the large number who began to see things his way was when the welfare program went into effect. Retirement, vacations, and made more like we were being identified—

[END PART THREE/BEGIN PART FOUR]

[01:31:01] **ROSCO:** —pension all the time. You take the people—Doug pointed it out to you pretty plainly there. When it came to all the economic conditions of the organization, Bridges was way out ahead of everybody else. The people, some of them, gradually come up to him. But it come to political positions, a lot of times it doesn't go with him. Like Portland decided not to go with him on the Negro question. Or we take the time Bridges, he went against [U.S. President Franklin Delano] Roosevelt when President John L. Lewis [president of the United Mine Workers and president of the CIO] endorsed—I can't think of his name now, who ran against Roosevelt.

[01:31:58] **HOWARD:** Smith or something like that?

[01:32:00] **ROSCO:** No.

[01:32:02] **HOWARD:** Dewey, wasn't that it?

[01:32:05] **ROSCO:** No . . .

[01:32:06] **HOWARD:** [Wendell] Willkie?

[01:32:06] **ROSCO:** Willkie. John L. Lewis supported Willkie. The majority of the rank and file maybe politically was against him on that one issue. But then there's been the other political issues they'd be for it. These things are discussed in the union meeting, and our membership is open-minded. Sure, we'll have some that's very anti-Bridges. But, by the same token, we have a hell of a majority that is Bridges because the elections all show it. So it shows the man was popular on the economic front. Maybe he made mistakes, they thought, on the political front, but they don't hold that against him, on the political front. Because too many men supported him at the same time. So when you follow through, like I showed you about Bob Baker there in

Portland when he run against Bridges, hell, he didn't even begin to touch Bridges. And he's out of the Portland local! The Portland local went strong for Bridges.

[01:33:01] **HOWARD:** You seem to be suggesting that Bridges' politics were sort of a liability. They didn't really help him. Is it possible they did help him with certain groups of people?

[01:33:08] **ROSCO:** Sure, it's bound to. Because politics is going to help anybody, whether it's pro or con. It's gonna pick certain people. What is Bridges' position on politics? He believes that every man's the same, whether he's Black, white, yellow, green, or what. He believes in the equality of all men. He believes on the economic—didn't Doug point it out very clearly to you there, the unskilled worker, the mule down below, as he puts it. He wanted him to get the same amount of money as the man who was up there driving the mule. Who had the handlebars between his hands and sat putting the load right down on top of him all the time. Bridges' position was it's all work, and you should be paid equally. Do you think those fellows down below getting the short end of the two-bit piece all the time is going to condemn Bridges for defending them? Where are they going to be? They're going to be behind Bridges. If Bridges pulls what they think is a faux pas one way, they're not opposed to him the other. To me, it's clear. I don't know whether I'm making you understand the conservatives, and the ultra-conservatives, and the radicals and everything. To me, it's clear.

[01:34:20] **HOWARD:** The bottom line is he delivered the goods.

[01:34:22] **ROSCO:** That's right.

[01:34:22] **HOWARD:** As long as he continued delivering the goods, they really didn't give a shit what he did in politics.

[01:34:26] **ROSCO:** And delivering the goods is that old dollar.

[01:34:28] **HOWARD:** Yeah.

[01:34:28] **ROSCO:** You can't get away from that. What made our union so strong is fighting for that dollar.

[01:34:32] **HOWARD:** See, I keep thinking that—

[01:34:34] **DOUG:** Not entirely. It came down to saying the union's won out on the dollar. At this particular time, it was the working conditions. The safety and the working conditions. Take the burdensome load off the guy's back, like a load limit or these things.

[01:34:47] **HOWARD:** But, see, the problem is it still doesn't explain why the UE didn't make it or Mine Mill didn't make it. Because they delivered the goods there, too.

[01:35:08] **ROSCO:** Well, too many men there in their rank and file read the media. I thought I made that point when I said more of our members go to membership meetings.

[01:35:15] **HOWARD:** Oh, that's what you meant by it.

[01:35:17] **ROSCO:** The percentage of our men to the membership meeting is greater. Where the problems are discussed in the membership meetings.

[01:35:22] **DOUG:** At that particular time, the difference is that this union was run by the rank and file. From the bottom up. At the beginning. I don't know whether it's true now.

[01:35:36] **ROSCO:** See, the media controls these other unions. More than what the officials say.

[01:35:40] **HOWARD:** So you're saying the workers in those other unions had more exposure to media that was against them and stuff like that.

[01:35:45] **ROSCO:** Well, not only that, they don't attend the meetings enough. It's compulsory in our organization that a man attends the meeting. In all the unions we have—otherwise they gotta pay a price. We can't transact any business unless we have a percentage of our members there. These other unions don't operate like that. They don't have the contact with the rank and file like we have. That's your main strength of our union.

[01:36:13] **HOWARD:** That's quite possible then. I hadn't thought about it that way.

[01:36:15] **DOUG:** You listen to Harry talk, did you?

[01:36:19] **HOWARD:** I've heard him once or twice, yeah.

[01:36:21] **DOUG:** Bottom line was the rank and file. The bottom line is rank and file. He's been asked innumerable times on TV, news media, "Well, can you deliver this, Harry?" "Look," he'd say, "rank and file controls the ILWU longshore division. Therefore, the rank and file's going to have their say. When the rank and file has the vote and the say, then I'll talk to you."

[01:36:58] **ROSCO:** "I go back to the rank and file. I tell them what the problem is. When they cast their ballot, that's the way I go." That's Harry's bottom line. You can't get away from it. In other words, take your Teamsters. How does the Teamsters run their organization?

[01:37:12] **HOWARD:** Very top down.

[01:37:14] **ROSCO:** Top down. Ours is run by the members.

[01:37:18] **HOWARD:** Well, maybe that's it.

[01:37:20] **DOUG:** Alright, you talking about the rest of the unions. They have a convention. They have it in Las Vegas or in Florida. They have a delegation; they elect the guy right there. We have a caucus. Then we have a convention. Then we put the nomination, and the rank and file votes. We're voting now. The local's voting now upstairs. We had primaries. We have a three-day vote.

[01:37:52] **HOWARD:** Where did that come from, that democracy? Do you know?

[01:37:54] **DOUG:** Where it comes from?

[01:37:56] **ROSCO:** That was what was built on the '34. That's what you and I went over once.

[01:37:58] **DOUG:** That's what the union was built on.

[01:37:58] **ROSCO:** "An injury to one is an injury to all." That's our foundation.

[01:38:05] **HOWARD:** That's a Wobbly thing, really, right? The democracy? The rotation in office? A Wobbly thing?

[01:38:09] **ROSCO:** See, I pointed that out to you. You see, before the '34 strike, every union signed up the contract with the boss. When we went out in '34, we went out, "An injury to one is an injury to all." We organized from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. We'll all go back to work as one. We struck as one; we went back to work as one.

[01:38:32] **DOUG:** It was a little different in the longshore division. You had the PMA, which represents all the employers. You're talking to one guy. [?Tom Clark?] . Everybody, from Tom Clark to stevedores to Ship Alliance, they gotta go through that agreement. Take these other unions. Even the warehouse or Teamsters. They have separate contracts with separate people. So therefore, that's why they're not such cooperative together [sic]. They got a sliver here and a sliver here. For example, here the beer truck drivers of this particular town, 174, was the biggest on the west coast. In '47 guys are striking the distributors for one year! Well, they haven't got a job. Here this guy's got a contract. Two guys have, or three people have. Two guys have. But if it was an operation like we do, you either strike everybody or—

[01:39:44] **ROSCO:** Every beer ought to be struck.

[01:39:48] **DOUG:** This is the difference. I think that was one of the reasons that made Bridges as a great labor leader. He's got some brains and he's got some moxie. He could figure that out. The rank and file, if you give them a right to do something. When you say "democracy," that's what gets me. We're voting for the President of the United States, the toughest job in the world, supposedly. And we have one fucking day. We got a little union out there; we have three days' primaries and three days' final. And they call us communists? They call us leftists? The only goddamn union that I know of or any country that's run democratic. They can say anything they want. But at least the rank and file has got its say.

[01:40:39] **HOWARD:** Do you think the ILWU is a little left of center?

[01:40:43] **DOUG:** Bull. I'll put it to you this way—

[01:40:46] **HOWARD:** You laugh at these questions.

[01:40:47] **DOUG:** I laugh at them, too, but I'm going to answer this..

[01:40:49] **HOWARD:** Well, look, okay, go ahead.

[01:40:51] **DOUG:** I'm going to answer it this way. ILWU union here, in its structure, is one of the greatest unions in the United States.

[01:41:00] **HOWARD:** I agree. That's why I'm studying it.

[01:41:02] **DOUG:** I'll go a little farther. Possibly in the world! I was in England nine months. I kinda liked their system of transportation. Probably if you go here the politicians would say, "Jesus Christ, that communist is getting too strong." I don't like this communistic thing, especially what's going on in the world today. Now the worker is not a communist.

[01:41:34] **ROSCO:** You guys are going to have to excuse me a minute.

[01:41:37] **DOUG:** What is he? The communists are saying, "You've got to go to work or I've got a gun in your mouth." That's what happened.

[01:41:45] **HOWARD:** Well, the ILWU has taken very progressive positions on the Vietnam War, on El Salvador recently. Always been good about championing the rights of Black people, stuff like that, for integrated unions. Very democratic. That doesn't make them communist by any means. Not by a long stretch.

[01:42:01] **DOUG:** I'm not saying you or anybody, but the news media makes it—

[01:42:02] **HOWARD:** Yeah, yeah. The reason I'm studying this union, really, is because I said, okay, Bridges is the only guy that survived the Cold War intact out of all the left-wing labor leaders. Why was that possible? That's what I'm trying to figure out in the research. Some of what you said—

[01:42:21] **DOUG:** I think the bottom line is the rank and file runs the outfit, supposedly. And they did at that time. I don't know about now.

[01:42:30] **HOWARD:** You think it's changed a little? You want to go off the tape here?

[Pause in the recording of the interview]

Ok, go ahead.

[01:42:35] **DOUG:** I have a news flash for you. What he's ever told me, he's willing to repeat it, so that's right. You don't have to put nothing in writing. If he said, "That's it," that's it. If a man's word is his bond with me, because when you put it on a piece of paper, the attorneys get involved.

[01:42:59] **HOWARD:** So you think he has integrity? What about all the accusations about him during the M&M negotiations, that he was always meeting with [Pacific Maritime Association President Paul] St. Sure on the side and making back door deals, and agreeing to terms and then coming to the membership. Did you ever hear those accusations?

[01:43:16] **DOUG:** Oh yeah, yeah.

[01:43:18] **HOWARD:** What about that, in terms of integrity?

[01:43:21] **DOUG:** I would say this—with the M&M, naturally there's people that were dissatisfied with the M&M. There's people that wanted to break bulk cargo. If you look at the record, most of them guys were on deck or driving a machine. They weren't doing the actual lifting. Well this is a good deal if I'm in a machine. I think the break off is all right. The old way, if it takes me 45 minutes to unload a load of lumber, I got to rest for an hour now. But on the M&M—

[01:44:14] **HOWARD:** Are you saying that the hold men pretty much supported the M&M negotiations? That isn't the way I heard it. Isn't that what you're implying, or not?

[01:44:25] **DOUG:** At that time, I'm saying, yes. I'll go off the tape now.

[01:44:30] **HOWARD:** Okay.

[END PART FOUR]